

STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTY OF CAMERON §
TOWN OF LAGUNA VISTA §

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE LAGUNA VISTA TOWN COUNCIL**

DATE: August 21, 2023
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
PLACE: Town of Laguna Vista City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Carter, Mayor
Johvonne Howard, Mayor Pro-Tem
Bettina Tolin, Council Member Place 3
Teresa Bryant, Council Member Place 5
Silke De Gobeo, Council Member Place 6

Alan T. Ozuna, Esq.
Rendie R. Gonzales, City Manager
Crystal Chapa, City Secretary
Anthony David, Chief of Police
Norma Barbosa, Court Clerk
Karla De La Pena, City Clerk

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rolando Gonzalez, Council Member Place 4

ORDER OF BUSINESS

• **Call to Order**

Mayor Carter called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

• **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

Invocation lead by Rusty Justice

• **Roll Call/Excused Absences-** Council Member Gonzalez

Motion was made by Council Member Bryant to excuse Council Member Gonzalez.
Second was made by Council Member De Tolin.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Bryant	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

OPEN FORUM - At this time, audience is allowed 3 minutes per person to address the Council on any topic. There will be no discussion or formal action taken during this agenda item. The speaker must identify themselves before speaking. A Speaker Request Form must be presented to the City Secretary prior to the meeting.

NONE

NEW BUSINESS – Discussion, consideration, and possible action on each of the following items:

- **2023/2024 CDC BUDGET** – Consideration and possible action to approve FY 2023-2024 budget for the Laguna Vista Community Development Corporation (City Manager)

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to approve the 2023-2024 CDC Budget as presented.

Second was made by Council Member Bryant.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

Resolution 2023-22 – Consideration and possible action to approve Resolution 2023-22 amending Resolutions 2022-11, 2022-17 and 2023-03 project outline for grant funding received as part of the ARPA funds. (City Manager)

Rendie advised that in the resolutions that were mentioned prior we designated for funds to be spent on police Toughbook's computers and we completed the process per ARPA with the bids and the bids received were higher than the original amount that we had designated. Rendie is asking that item number 11 be increased by \$13,850 for the Police Toughbook's.

Mayor Carter asked how long ago did we put the original request in, Rendie answered that we originally approved this in 2022. Then continued to explain when we get the quote we have you guys approve it and then it takes almost a year to get the paperwork ready to submit, we ask for quotes and then they have to be posted for so many days and then we have to review. Part of the problem is when we get the original quotes so we can estimate the cost, then the prices go up over the years' time and here we are. This will be for 8 computers for all 8 officers and will be compatible in their units as well as here in the office.

Council Member Tolin asked what the impact of not getting one per officer and getting a few less that they can share when they are not on shift and if that possible. Rendie advised that we can

make it work, we would just need to check if we can have more than one user per IP address but we will make do with whatever is provided. Rendie added that these have removable upgradable hard drives for a longer lifespan with less maintenance.

Mayor Carter asked Chief David if he would recommend getting one for each officer or less than one for each officer, Chief David answered one for each officer.

Resolution 2023-23 – Consideration and possible action to approve Resolution 2023-23 appointing ARPA Invitation for Quote – Project 2312 for purchase of Toughbook’s Computers for Laguna Vista Police Department. (City manager)

Rendie advised the council that this is another one of ARPA’s regulations we have to make another resolution confirming the bid that we are going to choose for the vendor.

Motion was made by Council Member Romero to approve resolution 2023-23.
Second was made by Council Member Bryant.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2023-05– Public hearing, consideration, and possible action on **FIRST READING** of Ordinance Number 2023-05 adopting the 2023 ad valorem tax rate for maintenance and operation and for the interest & sinking fund. (City Manager)

Rendie gave an overview of the proposed tax rate at the hearing and advised the expense increases will be going towards staff salary increases, EMS department that will have 4 full time EMT Positions that will supplement the ambulance services we already have as well as the park improvement expense, and insurance increases. Rendie further advised of the surrounding cities tax rates showing that our tax rate is very low even with the proposed increase and with that the increase is coming with an EMS department.

Mayor opened the public hearing at 6:19pm

Citizen Charlene Kuprel of 701 Halum spoke to the Council stating it was good that you told us what you are adding but what are you cutting from the budget, since we are all have to cut our budgets due to rent being more, groceries being more, gas being more, and everything being more. Charlene further stated that everyone that she knows had their appraisals significantly increase giving the city significantly more money. She stated she would anticipate that the city would be lowering the tax rate and would still get more money than last year and with new construction and with new people moving and not having homestead the town would get more

money. She stated that she really was expecting to see the rate go down and that the water district is lowering their tax rate.

Mayor stated that according to the Cameron County appraisal district the average taxable value increased by \$449, not that everyone is affected the same way.

Citizen Susan Anderson spoke to the council that the community is mainly elderly people as are they, and a lot of people are moving down here because it is a very lovely place to live. She further stated that the food costs much less and they are from Wisconsin and are very familiar with the taxes in Illinois and Wisconsin. She also stated that their taxes are a lot more than the taxes are here. Mrs. Anderson stated our town is growing very rapidly and as we are growing expenses to the infrastructure are added and many aspects of the increase in population have costs as well. She continued to state we do need improved EMS and further stated I would ask you to think of your child, your parent, your spouse, and if someone would have gotten there 5 minutes sooner would they have survived and how would that feel for the rest of your life. Mrs. Anderson stated not only is the council starting a new department but thinking of the future and getting ready because the growth here is rapid and it's no wonder because it is such a nice place.

Citizen William Buyck with fire and rescue stated there are a number of us on that live on the golf course, we have our own medical bags in our vehicles so we can get to the people at the golf course faster than at the fire station or any of the other EMS or ambulances. Mr. Buyck continued to state we do have a system in place, it's volunteer and we are not always there on time but there are a lot of calls we go to. Mr. Buyck added this last week it's been over 8 days and we haven't had any calls, so we are going to pay 4 people to do nothing. Mr. Buyck asked what is going to happen to the fire department, are they going to also help with the fires and car accidents. He continued these are the things we need to know but we do have volunteer EMS right now.

Council Member Romero thanked Mr. Buyck and the rest of the crew that volunteer's days and nights, holidays, and weekends in all sincerity and stated our town owes a significant debt of gratitude to you and everyone who has served over the decades. He also added that the building we are in right now was constructed by the volunteer fire department. Council Member Romero stated that he 100 percent agrees that we have a tremendous force. Council member Romero also stated for years he was a volunteer with the fire department and over those years he served under 5 different chiefs and there were time we had a lot of active enthusiastic volunteers and it was fantastic but there are also times that we were hurting for people that are willing to get up at 2 or 3 in the morning and go put themselves in a situation where someone could be dying and there are times where he has also been the only person responding to an emergency which he felt comfortable with, given his medical background. Council member Romero continued to state he thinks that as our community grows and continues to expand that need is only going to expand, if you look at our demographics here in Laguna Vista, we are significantly older than our surrounding community. Council Member Romero stated this is the best town in America and the reason people are moving here from all over. Council Member Romero further stated it's our charge to make sure that growth is sustainable and keeps the essence of who we are and

thinks the volunteer force will always be a component of our FRO in a community our size. Council Member Romero stated the South Padre Island Fire department has 3 apparatus that are able to respond to fires 24/7 and brave men and women that are willing to man those apparatus and put themselves in harm's way. He continued to state those fire trucks will sit there and not have to roll out, thank God, but when they do, we are grateful that they are there. Council Member Romero stated that he has been in situations where we made the difference in life or death and has also worked in a hospital for a long time and has seen a lot of people pass away. Council Member Romero continued to state anything that we can do to keep our community safe and save lives when we can, he feels is his duty and his roll serving in this community to do what he can to enforce it. He continues to state that having a force that is available 24/7 to augment our volunteers to make sure if someone had just been there 5 minutes earlier to help until the ambulance could get there that they would still be here, that would devastate the family for the rest of their lives. Council Member Romero stated he is completely with all sincerity, grateful for our volunteer fire department but this community has grown to the point where we need continuous coverage, and we are lucky we have had 8 days with no calls.

Mayor Carter thanked the volunteer fire department for their service and let them know they are very much appreciated.

Citizen Betsy Hosick of the Golf Course spoke to the council and advised that she came to the meeting today to say she is in favor of doing whatever we need to do to save lives and thinks having an EMS will help us to do that. Mrs. Hosick stated minutes matter, seconds matter sometimes, and if you are the person that is in need of that service and there isn't someone there you could end up with a life of disability or even death. She continues to state It's like buying insurance, I don't buy insurance because I think I am going to get in a wreck, I buy insurance just in case. Mrs. Hosick states I think this is the same kind of thing we don't need to pay for EMS because we think something is going to happen, but we need to be ready in case something does.

Citizen Bob Perkins stated he is not here to argue against medical care for anyone. He continues to state he is a member of the armed forces from 1972-1976. Mayor Carter thanked him for his services and Mr. Perkins thanked everyone for there's as well. Mr. Perkins stated that he has been a public accountant for over 30 years and so he looks for funding. He continues to state how can we fund this someplace else; how can we get some grant money. Mr. Perkins states the Texas Department of State Hill services seems to have money for such things like this and FEMA recommends a whole list of ways to fund this other than to raise taxes. Mr. Perkins continues to state taxes are astronomical here, my mother lived in Arizona and paid \$627 for a house I sold for \$160,000. Mr. Perkins states there may be other sources of revenue and I am just asking that be looked into.

Citizen Dan Buklew spoke to the Council and thanked them all for serving and thanked the volunteer staff. Mr. Buklew stated that he thinks that things are moving pretty fast here, the reality here is there has been a big property evaluation increase. Mr. Buklew continues to state

we have a situation where the community is growing here and your adding housing units, the reality is that adds available tax revenue. Mr. Buklew states the response time with the volunteers supplemented by Los Fresnos is not unreasonable but could be better, and 6 minutes makes a difference. Mr. Buklew continues to state decisions need to be made and lives do matter but adding 4 full-time people is something the city will never unthread. It is very easy to add people on but very difficult to unthread it, and it is probably not the year to do this. Mr. Buklew states the town has a reasonable response already, is 6 minutes better, yes, is 3 minutes better than that, yes. He further states It is a decision that every business runs into, at what point in time do you look at the trade of lives and money, if you just say we are going to spend any amount of money because lives matter, it can go on and on and on. Mr. Buklew states it probably shouldn't be this year; you are moving too fast, and this is probably not the year to do it.

Mayor Carter stated to back our notice of public hearing, the average homestead will pay \$111 a year \$9 and change a month to fund this. Mayor Carter continued to state it isn't easy to make these kinds of decisions, but I can't put a value on a life, and if I can help people live a better and longer life for \$9 a month, I am willing to make that decision and I think the rest of us are too.

Mayor Carter closed the public meeting at 6:42pm

Motion was made by Council Member Bryant that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of 0.454124, which is effectively a 25.13 percent increase in the tax rate, with a maintenance and operations rate component of 0.427236.

Second was made by Council Member Romero.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Toljn	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

Motion was made by Council Member Romero that we adopt as a component of the tax rate an interest and sinking fund rate of 0.026888.

Second was made by Council Member Tolin.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

Town attorney Mr. Ozuna read the ordinance.

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2023-06– Public Hearing, consideration and possible action on **FIRST READING** of Ordinance Number 2023-06 adopting the 2023-2024 fiscal year budget. (City Manager)

Rendie advised the council of the draft ordinance including the breakdown.

Mayor Carter Opened the Public Hearing at 6:44pm

Citizen Robert Perkins addressed the council on his concerns with revenue and where it comes from. Mr. Perkins states we are going to adopt this budget but there is nothing in the revenue or grant money for EMS people and there is nothing in the budget that I see to collect fees for non-local people using Roloff park, I live 3 or 4 doors down from the park. Mr. Perkins continues to state we are constantly being bombarded by fun runs and various other things that disrupt our daily lives, we have other parks, run someplace else please. Mr. Perkins states we should be collecting fees for people who want to use our facilities, if we are going to put out \$150,000 for the park, we better have a way to get it back and it should have a way to for itself. He further stated that we just cost him \$927 for the tax increase that's what my annual tax increase is to Laguna Vista.

Council Member Tolin stated that the Mayor had stated earlier the budget increase of \$500,000 is not what the tax rate is funding, the proposed tax rate which has already been approved. Will only generate approximately \$150,000 which is the amount it will cost to cover the 4 EMS; it comes out to around \$115 per household which is \$9 a month. We want you all to know that because we spent a lot of time at the last meeting talking about it. We are dedicated to this community, we understand that we have a lot of retired people, I am one of them, I am recently retired, I do not have an income, I understand this, we all understand this, I want you all to know that we take this very seriously. It is not \$500,000 that the tax rate is going to pay for it only generates about \$156,000 and this city has not raised taxes in 6 years because that's how seriously we take taxes. Council Member Tolin States the reason I chose \$0.05 is because we don't want to raise the tax rate again next year or the year after that. We care about all of you very deeply. We did this specifically to pay for the 4 EMS and not for anything else.

Mayor Carter closed the public hearing at 6:50pm

Council Member Howard arrived at 6:53pm

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to approve the first reading of Ordinance number 2023-06 2023-2024 fiscal year budget.

Second was made by Council Member De Gobeo.

VOTE

Council Member Romero

Aye

Council Member Bryant

Aye

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye		

Motion Carried

Town attorney Mr. Ozuna read the ordinance

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2023-07– Consideration and possible action on **FIRST READING** of Ordinance Number 2023-07 designation restricted and designated fund balance for 2022/2023 fiscal year. (City Manager)

Rendie advised that by the home rule charter we are required to keep 90 days of our expenses for emergencies, right now it is in an open fund balance, and I would like designated as a restricted fund balance and held separately in the books. The proposed number is \$580,000 for this current fiscal year.

Mayor added that beginning in October we are going to have to restrict an additional \$150,000 for the park and then increase by \$140,000 to reach the 90-day threshold once we adopt our budget.

Motion was made by Mayor Carter to approve ordinance 2023-07.

Second was made by Council Member De Gobeo.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye		

Motion Carried

Town attorney Mr. Ozuna read the ordinance.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to adjourn.

Second was made by Council Member Bryant.

VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Council Member Gonzalez Aye

Motion Carried
Meeting Adjourned at 6:56 pm



Michael Carter, Mayor

Attest:



Crystal Chapa, City Secretary